

PRESS RELEASE

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Art + Practice and the Hammer Museum Present *John Outterbridge: Rag Man*

John Outterbridge: Rag Man

Art + Practice

December 12, 2015 - February 27, 2016

Opening: December 12, 2015 2 - 4 pm



(Los Angeles, CA) - Art + Practice and The Hammer Museum present a solo exhibition of artworks by artist **John Outterbridge** (b. 1933, Greenville, NC). Curated by Hammer senior curator Anne Ellegood with assistant curator Jamillah James, *John Outterbridge: Rag Man* will be on view December 12, 2015 - February 27, 2016 at Art + Practice in Leimert Park.

In the more than fifty years since he moved to Los Angeles, Outterbridge has been a prominent figure within the local art scene, leaving his mark from Pasadena to Leimert Park to Watts as an artist, an educator, and an activist. His artwork has been shaped by his childhood in a culturally rich community in the American south steeped in vernacular forms of creativity and characterized by a strong ethos of saving and recycling, as well as by historical events such as the migration of African Americans from south to north in the first half of the twentieth century and the Watts uprising of 1965.

“It is a true honor to have the opportunity to work with John, who is such an important figure in the history of contemporary art in Los Angeles. While he is highly respected among his community, his work is not as widely known to the residents of Los Angeles as it should be. His work of the

past decade is just as compelling, beautifully crafted, and conceptually resonant as his work of the 1970s. Not only is John a great artist, he is an exceptional human being. I know he is looking forward to having his work shown again in the context of Leimert Park, after showing with Brockman Gallery many years ago," said curator Anne Ellegood.

Outterbridge's sculptures are composed from found and discarded materials and debris, including rags, rubber, and scrap metal. As much as Outterbridge's works are rooted in folk and African art, they also engage in dialogue with developments in twentieth-century art such as Dada, assemblage, and the readymade. A peer of artists such as Alonzo and Dale Davis (who founded Brockman Gallery in 1967), Melvin Edwards, Noah Purifoy, and Betye Saar, Outterbridge is identified with the California assemblage movement, which emerged in the 1950s with the work of artists like George Herms and Edward Kienholz and is considered one of the most vital artistic developments on the West Coast during this period.

The majority of the works in the exhibition are small wall-mounted constructions made since 2002. These pieces have a talismanic quality, containing not only the metal tool parts and carved wood found in many of his earlier works but also symbolically loaded materials such as human hair and the asafetida bags traditionally worn on the body to ward off disease. The most recent works, the colorful Rag and Bag Idiom series (2012), feature Outterbridge's characteristic found textiles painted an array of vibrant colors. The inclusion of a few early works from the 1970s make evident the way that certain materials, forms, and motifs—such as the American flag, rags, bags, and the human figure—have reoccurred throughout Outterbridge's career. Not only has Outterbridge made important and compelling contributions to the history of contemporary art in Los Angeles—influencing a number of younger artists in the process—but he has also been a vital and steadfast part of the community. A committed educator and social activist, Outterbridge cofounded the Communicative Arts Academy in Compton and was director of the Watts Towers Art Center from 1975-1992.

The opening for *John Outterbridge: Rag Man* will take place on December 12, 2015 from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at 4339 Leimert Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90008.

ABOUT JOHN OUTERBRIDGE

John Outterbridge was born in Greenville, North Carolina, in 1933. He studied at the American Academy of Art in Chicago in the 1950s and moved to Los Angeles in 1963. In 1994 he received an honorary doctorate of fine arts from Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles. He cofounded the Communicative Arts Academy in Compton, where he was artistic director from 1969 to 1975, and was director of the Watts Towers Art Center from 1975 to 1992. Outterbridge's work has been included in several group exhibitions, such as *When Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American Self*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2014); *The Encyclopedic Palace*, 55th Venice Biennale (2013); *Blues for Smoke*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2013); *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2011); *Los Angeles 1955-1985: Birth of an Art Capital*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2006); *São Paulo Bienal* (1994); *INSITE 94*, San Diego and Tijuana (1994); and *Forty Years of California Assemblage*, UCLA Wight Art Gallery (1989). A survey of his work was presented in 1993 at the African American Museum in Los Angeles, and he had a solo exhibition at LA<>ART, Los Angeles, in 2011. In the 1970s and

1980s he showed with Brockman Gallery in Leimert Park, and he is now represented by Tilton Gallery in New York. In 2013 Outterbridge received the Governors' Award for Outstanding Service to Artists from the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and in 2012 he received the California African American Museum Lifetime Achievement Award.

CREDIT

John Outterbridge: Rag Man is organized by Hammer Museum senior curator Anne Ellegood with assistant curator Jamillah James.

The Hammer Museum at Art + Practice is a Public Engagement Partnership supported by The James Irvine Foundation.

Special thanks to Tilton Gallery, New York.

ABOUT ART + PRACTICE

Conceived and founded by artist Mark Bradford, philanthropist and collector Eileen Harris Norton and social activist Allan DiCastro, Art + Practice (A+P) is an arts and education private operating foundation based in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. A+P's mandate is to create a developmental platform that, on one hand, supports the acquisition of practical skills for foster youth, and, on the other, stresses the importance of creative activity within a larger social context.

A+P INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and public programs are free and available to the public. To learn more visit www.artandpractice.org.

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12 PM - 6 PM. A+P is located at 4339 Leimert Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90008. Street parking is available.

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum at UCLA offers collections, exhibitions, and programs that span the classic to the contemporary in art, architecture, and design. The Hammer's international exhibition program focuses on wide-ranging thematic and monographic exhibitions, highlighting contemporary art since the 1960s and the work of emerging artists through Hammer Projects and the Hammer's biennial, Made in L.A. As a cultural center, the Hammer Museum offers nearly 300 free public programs a year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances at the Billy Wilder Theater which also houses the UCLA Film & Television Archive. The Hammer is home of the Armand Hammer Collection of American and European paintings, as well as the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection and the Hammer Contemporary Collection. The Hammer Contemporary Collection focuses on art of all media since 1960 with an emphasis on works of the last ten years, works on paper, and art made in Los Angeles. The museum also houses the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts—comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present—and oversees the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA. Free admission to the Hammer Museum is made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free and open to the public. Visit www.hammer.ucla.edu for current exhibition and program information and call (310) 443-7041 for tours.

Hours: Tuesday-Friday 11 AM - 8 PM., Saturday & Sunday 11 AM - 5 PM Closed Mondays and national holidays. The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood, Los Angeles. Parking is available onsite for \$3 (maximum 3 hours) or for a \$3 flat rate after 6 PM

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Tuesday to Saturday, 12 - 6pm
artandpractice.org

PHOTO CREDIT

John Outterbridge, *Rag and Bag
Idiom II*, 2012. Mixed media, 19 x 18
½ x 2 ½ inches. Image courtesy of
Tilton Gallery, New York.